

15 Ways You Can Save Water*

1. Fix dripping faucets.

Most houses have a dozen or more faucets, turnoff valves and toilets that need periodic maintenance or they will leak. If you're dripping 60 drops per minute, that's 192 gallons of water lost per month.

2. Replace your old toilet, the largest water user inside your home.

If your home was built before 1992 and the toilet has never been replaced, then it is very likely that you do not have a water efficient toilet. Older toilets use anywhere from 3.5 to 8 gallons per flush, while new high efficiency toilets are mandated to use 1.6 gallons per flush or less.

3. Wash clothes with care.

The washing machine is your second highest indoor water user. Replacing an old clothes washer with a new high efficiency model can reduce hot water use by over 60% and save a family of four 8,000 gallons of water a year. If you can't by a new machine, operate the washer with full loads only – it's the most efficient way to wash clothes. If you must wash smaller loads, select the minimum water volume setting required per load.

4. Use the dishwasher.

In most cases running your dishwasher with a full load of dishes will use less water than washing the same number of dishes by hand. Save energy too by turning off the drying cycle.

5. Take a shower instead of a bath.

A typical bath uses 24 gallons of water, while a typical 8-minute shower uses 17 gallons. If you take a shorter shower, 3 or 4 minutes, you'll use only 7.5 gallons. To maximize showering efficiency make sure that you have installed low-flow showerheads in all of your bathrooms. All showerheads manufactured in the U.S. must restrict flow to 2.5 gallons per minute or less.

6. Turn off the water when brushing your teeth and washing your hands.

The average faucet flow rate is 1.3 gallons per minute. Save several gallons a day by turning off that faucet while you brush and wash.

7. Compost your vegetable scraps and coffee grounds.

In-sink garbage disposals use water, and the food waste you put down them adds unwanted nutrients to local lakes and rivers. Put those nutrients to good use through composting.

8. Train your lawn.

About half of the water used in a single-family home during the course of a year will be put onto the landscape and most of that on lawns. Train your lawn to be less thirsty by: removing only one third of the grass length at each mowing, leaving grass clippings on the lawn, helping the lawn establish deeper roots by watering less frequently, using proper soil preparation and lawn maintenance practices, and watering only at night.

9. Keep lawn fertilizer on your grass and off driveways and sidewalks.

Fertilizers help your lawn grow, but they also help unwanted weeds grow in lakes and rivers. Many of our lakes and rivers suffer from too many nutrients. So, avoid spreading fertilizers on surfaces where they can run off easily.

10. Plant the right plants for your climate.

If you're putting in a new landscape or slowly changing the current landscaping at your home, select plants that are appropriate for your local terrain and climate and soil conditions. They should survive on natural precipitation and may only need to be watered during drought.

11. Sweep those sidewalks and driveways.

Using the hose to wash down sidewalks, driveways, and pavements is a wasteful and unnecessary practice. Your garden hose can use more than 10 gallons of water per minute. Save water and get a little exercise by using a broom.

12. Use a car wash or wash your car on the lawn.

Many car washes recycle water so less is wasted. Washing your car on a level lawn gives water a chance to soak into the ground and not add to local runoff. Make sure you use a spray nozzle with a cut-off handle so you easily can turn the water off when you're not rinsing the car, and use a phosphorus-free detergent.

13. Protect your shoreland.

Natural ground cover, like trees, brush and a leafy layer in the soil allows water to seep into ground and prevent sediments and pollution from running into the lake when it rains. Clearing trees and shrubs for development eliminates protective buffer strips along waterways, and runoff water carrying sediment and phosphorus greatly increases. One of the best things you can do to protect the water is to stop mowing the lawn all the way down to the shore. Leave it alone, and a high quality buffer will gradually grow back on its own.

14. Sponsor or participate in a lake, river or stream clean-up day.

Many organizations and communities sponsor "clean-up" days in the spring when volunteers can do their part to remove litter and debris from waterways. Check with your local parks department or conservation clubs to see what's planned in your area. None planned? Start one yourself.

15. Join a local lake association.

Wisconsin has over 600 lake associations. Members of these associations work together to maintain or improve the water quality of their lakes.

* Many of these ideas have been adapted from the California Urban Water Conservation Council's *H₂O Use Water Saver Home* web site at:

<http://www.h2ouse.net/index.cfm>